

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EURE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00
INRE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03
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O R 131500Z JUN 77
FM AMEMBASSY BERLIN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5019
INFO AMENBASSY BELGRADE
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMENBASSY PRAGUE
AMEMBASSY SOFIA
AMEMBASSY WARSAW
USMISSION USBERLIN
USMISSION NATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L BERLIN 6272

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, PGOV, US,GE
SUBJ: AXEN ON US/GDR RELATIONS

REF: BERLIN 6251

1. CHARGE USED OCCASION OF BRITISH EMBASSY RECEPTION JUNE 9 TO
INTRODUCE HIMSELF TO SED POLITBURO MEMBER HERMAN AXEN FOR
BRIEF DISCUSSION OF US/GDR RELATIONS. AXEN DID VIRTUALLY ALL
OF THE TALKING. HE MADE NO MENTION OF THE PRESIDENT'S
REPORT TO THE CSCE COMMISSION; THE GDR'S JUNE 8 ORAL PROTEST,
OR THE MEDIA REATMENT JUNE 9 OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE US.
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HIS MAIN THESIS WAS THAT THE US IS A WORLD POWER, WITH
MAJOR INTERESTS, WHEREAS THE GDR IS A SMALL COUNTRY.
DESPITE THE DIFFERENCES IN SIZE, POWER, AND INTERESTS,
THE GDR WISHED TO HAVE "NORMAL" RELATIONS WITH THE US.
IN RESPONSE TO CHARGE'S QUESTION OF WHAT HE ENVISAGED
AS "NORMAL", AXEN SAID THAT COULD ONLY BE DETERMINED
OVER THE COURSE OF TIME AND THROUGH MORE DIALOGUE. THE

GDR WAS "REALISTIC" ABOUT WHO THE US' FRIENDS WERE AND DID NOT EXPECT THE US TO IGNORE ITS GREATER INTERESTS WITH ITS IMPORTANT FRIENDS, SUCH AS THE FRG. AT THE SAME TIME, AXEN SAID HHE DOUBTED THAT THE FRG WOULD TAKE ISSUE IF THE US AND GDR DEVELOPED BETTER RELATIONS.

2. AXEN THEN MENTIONED SEVERAL AREAS WHERE HE THOUGHT THE US MIGHT FIND IT USEFUL AND INTERESTING TO COOPERATE WITH THE GDR. ONE WAS THE COMMERCIAL AREA. WHILE TRADE WITH THE GDR MIGHT BE ONLY A VERY SMALL PERCENTAGE OF US FOREIGN TRADE, THE IMPORTANT THING, ACCORDING TO AXEN, WAS THAT IT WILL CONTINUE TO BE ABLE IN THE FUTURE TO PAY FOR WHAT IT BUYS. WITHOUT BEING SPECIFIC, AXEN THEN SAID HE THOUGHT THERE WERE POSSIBLE AREAS FOR COOPERATION IN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY. ANOTHER AREA COULD BE IN CULTURAL AND SPORTS EXCHANGES, AND AXEN NOTED THE GDR HAD CONVEYED ITS VIEWS ON US/GDR RELATIONS IN THE MAY 12 AIDE MEMOIRE.

3. IN GENERAL, ACCORDING TO AXEN, BOTH COUNTRIES SHOULD DEFINE THE COURSE THEY WANT THEIR RELATIONS TO TAKE, NOT BE DIVERTED BY IMMEDIATE PROBLEMS, BUT KEEP THEIR EYES ON THE FUTURE.

4. AT THE JUNE 10 RECEPTION IN THE EMBASSY FOR THE DEPARTING GDR ECONOMIC DELEGATION, STATE SECRETARY BEIL FIRST TOLD CHARGE THAT THE GDR REACTION TO THE PRESIDENT'S REPORT HAD BEEN "EXAGGERATED," THEN MODIFIED HIS TONE SOMEWHAT TO CALL IT A "STRONG REACTION."

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5. COMMENT: AXEN'S APPROACH ON US/GDR RELATIONS PLAYS DOWN THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE GDR'S REACTION TO THE PRESIDENT'S SEMI-ANNUAL REPORT ON HELSINKI IMPLEMENTATION (REFTEL). IN ADDITION, WE HAVE SEEN NO EVIDENCE OF AMOUNTING ANTI-US CAMPAIGN IN THE GDR PRESS IN THE DAYS FOLLOWING THE GDR PROTEST. SOME PERSPECTIVE ON WHY THE GDR'S INITIAL REACTION TO THE REPORT HAS BEEN TONED DOWN IN THIS EAY MAY BE CONTAINED IN REMARKS MADE TO EMBOFF BY A DEPUTY FOREIGN POLICY EDITOR OF THE EAST BERLIN DAILY BERLINER ZEITUNG (BZ) ON JUNE 10.

6. ACCORDING TO THE EDITOR, THE GDR OVERREACTED TO THE PRESIDENT'S REPORT AT FIRST SOLELY ON THE BASIS OF INCOMPLETE FRG PRESS ACCOUNTS WHICH MADE IT SEEM AS IF THE SOVIETS AND THE GDR HAD BEEN SINGLED OUT FOR CRITICISM. THE EDITOR MAINTAINED THAT THE GDR MFA DID NOT HAVE A COMPLETE TEXT OF THE REPORT UNTIL JUNE 9 (THE DAY AFTER GEYER'S ORAL PROTEST). NOW HAVING READ THE REPORT THE MFA OFFICIALS CONSIDER THEIR INITIAL

REACTION, IN WHICH NEUES DEUTSCHLAND AND BZ WERE ORDERED ON SHORT NOTICE TO PREPARE FOR A FULL PAGE ATTACK ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE US AND INCLUDING THE MFA OFFICIAL PROTEST, TO HAVE BEEN TO EXTREME. IN FACT, ACCORDING TO THE EDITOR, CURRENT OPINION BOTH IN THE MFA AND AT BZ IS THAT THE GDR DID NOT COME OFF BADLY IN THE REPORT SINCE POSITIVE ELEMENTS SUCH AS IREX AND PROGRESS ON HUMANITARIAN CASES ARE INCLUDED IN IT. THE EDITOR SAID THAT THE GDR COULD NEVER ADMIT THAT IT HAD OVER-REACTED MERELY ON THE BASIS OF FRG PRESS REPORTS, BUT THE SED WAS SEEKING WAYS TO MINIMIZE WHATEVER UNNECESSARY DAMAGE MIGHT HAVE BEEN DONE. IN THIS REGARD, THE EDITOR RECALLED THAT POLITBURO MEMBER AXEN APPEARED BEFORE GDR EDITORS AND DEPUTY EDITORS ON JUNE 9 TO ORDER THAT REPORTING ON WESTERN COUNTRIES WITH WHICH THE GDR HAD "NORMAL" RELATIONS, INCLUDING THE US, REMAIN MODERATE IN TONE WITH NO STEPPED UP CRITICISM PRIOR

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TO BELGRADE. THIS MEETING TOOK PLACE THE DAY BEFORE AXEN SPOKE WITH THE CHARGE.

7. IT APPEARS THAT THE GDR MAY HAVE EGG ON IS FACE AFTER ITS SHORT LIVED ATTACK ON THE PRESIDENT'S REPORT, AND AXEN AND BEIL'S COMMENTS TO HHE CHARGE MAY BE INTENDED TO SOOTH THINGS OVER IN THE AFTERMATH. POLANSKY

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